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The project described was designed to promote interrelation of educational change and sociological study of the community and school. Location of the project was chosen by a determination of size, population, organization, and cost. A town of 36,000 inhabitants in middle socioeconomic status was chosen. The board of education had a high budget and was independent of government. Knowledge of structure and operation of the school system was developed to permit smooth functioning. The ultimate goal was an improved school in terms of mental health. Topics discussed in group participation were learning as related to child interest, responsiveness, and attitude toward marks. The responses were somewhat questioning and probing, and the teachers partially enacted the proposals. A section of the report was devoted to analysis, including basic goals. Major areas evaluated were orientation to children, teaching function and methods, authority role, and orientation to profession. Termination of the field action had three major goals: a reassessment of the style of work with teachers, pursuit of complex questions unanswered in the first phases, and a completion of the analysis of all changes which had taken place. All answers offered are tentative and are but basic explorations into what makes and blocks change process in a mental health-oriented program with an educational setting. The immediate purpose was to facilitate smoother running of similar future projects.							
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EDUCATIONAL CHANGE PROCESS IN A FIELD PROJECT¹

Introduction

In January 1958, a five-year program on the role of the school in promoting mental health² was undertaken by the Bank Street College of Education, supported by the National Institute of Mental Health. The unifying principle underlying this work is a dynamic concept of the learning process, to wit: that intellectual functions such as mastery of symbol systems, acquisition and ordering of information, reasoning, problem-solving, are interdependent with emotional forces such as drives, fears and conflicts.

The school, where learning is the main life-task for the individual, can be a major force in contributing to ego-strength. It is in this particular orbit of influence that it can fulfill a large-scale, preventive function with respect to the encompassing question of mental health, aside from its more special responsibility for providing remedial and referral services in cases of maladaptation.

A dynamic concept of learning in no way lessens the need for the school curriculum to be a thoughtfully planned design of stimulation.

1. Interim report February 7, 1963

2. The Schools and Mental Health Program is supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Public Health Service, grant #3M9135/MH09135.

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challenge and mastery. It does, however, shift the focus of interest, experimentation and study from what is being presented to the child to what the child is absorbing in his own system of skills, ideas and feelings, and to the ways in which external stimuli and inner forces interact.

Understanding children in terms of the interaction between intellectual functioning and emotional well-being, while recognizing the potent influence of social-environmental factors, is not equivalent to teaching them. Only when such understanding can be translated into the operations and interactions of daily life in the classroom does a concept of learning in relation to personality development become a functional tool for the educative process.

There is also an increasing awareness of the importance of the total school atmosphere which conditions the progress to be made by teachers working as individuals in their classrooms. Interest has grown in developing a program that would systematically take into account the functioning of the school as a social institution, as an "organized complexity" of structure and interrelationships, while continuing to keep the teacher in focus as the ultimate, direct agent of influence.

The Field Project, briefly described here, is designed to inter-relate studies of educational change process with sociological studies of the school and community.

Selection, Liaison, and Sociological Studies

Criteria for the location of the field project included distance from the institution, size of community, population characteristics, organizational pattern of the school system, and cost per pupil. A secondary set of criteria included factors that might hinder or help the proposed research, such as the nature of the relations between the schools and the community, strengths and weaknesses of the school system, attitudes towards research and mental health ideas, and so forth. The choice of what we are calling the "Brookview system" finally hinged on the fact that the Superintendent and his staff were interested in the question of children's self-feelings and their images of their own capacity for learning.

The community also answered our need for a school situation which presented educational practices and problems common to much of America today. This is a town of some 36,000 inhabitants in the middle range of the socio-economic status -- about equally divided between blue-collar and white-collar occupations, and with few families at the extremes of poverty or wealth.

The Board of Education is politically independent of the municipal government, in that members of the Board (nine in number) are elected and the school budget passed upon by the voters in an annual election and referendum.

Liaison with the school system was established through discus-

sion with the Superintendent and the Board of Education, and through interviews with principals, as well as classroom observations, in the eight elementary schools. These contacts with school personnel served several purposes: to foster mutual confidence, increase our knowledge of the system and provide a basis for the choice of one of the elementary schools as the site of the educational action of the project. We made it clear that our purpose was to work with school people toward a common goal of maximizing learning potential through a collaboration with classroom teachers on school problems of mutual interest and concern.

The choice of the Franklin School (also a fictitious name) as the location of the educational action took into account the heterogeneity of its population, its manageable size, the fact that its staff was not already committed to other special projects, and the interests of its Principal and staff. In choosing this school we had in mind certain criteria vis-a-vis the principal: competence as an administrator and supervisor; readiness to allow teachers freedom to develop new classroom practices; sincere interest in furthering the professional development; willingness to allow an outside group to work freely within the school, maintaining the confidentiality promised to the teachers.

Since the educational action was to be located in a natural community -- a school -- it was necessary to know and understand

the structure and operations of the school system, the character of the community, and the interaction of school and community. Our plan, therefore, called for sociological studies to provide as much of this kind of knowledge as time and resources would permit. Ideally such a study would have preceded, as well as accompanied, the educational action, and would have included an intensive study of the school in which the educational action was to be instituted. Our schedule did permit us to carry on the sociological work concurrently with the educational action, but to conduct two such studies in one small (14 classrooms) school simultaneously seemed unwise. It was decided therefore to assign one sociologist to another elementary school ("Wilbur Wright") for a study of its organizational patterns and processes and educational problems, from which general characteristics and problems of the Brookview school system might be inferred; and to assign a second sociologist to a study of the general structure and processes of the system as a whole, especially in relation to its interaction with the community. The basic method of these studies has been direct observation, supplemented by interviews and the collection of documentary material.

Educational Action

The ultimate goal of an educational field action project is an improved school milieu in mental health terms. The goal envisaged

for a short term program such as this is limited to any verifiable movement in the direction of such an ultimate goal.

The substantive work of educational action with the teachers includes the variety of roles enacted by teachers with children, with parents, with supervisory personnel, and as interacting members of a school faculty. The program has been extended to include administrative and special school personnel, and the parent body. The specific content of the work undertaken was determined after conversations with school personnel who helped to identify common areas of interest and concern.

Methods of work are based on two principles: 1) for basic change in perception, attitude, or motivation to take place teachers need experience at the level of psychodynamic involvement; and 2) for changes to be carried into practice, they should be guided in translating their new insights into concrete school practices. This calls for working with teachers in small groups within the context of psychodynamic principles, and with individual teachers on the basis of non-authority-vested consultation.

The educational action is guided by widest possible knowledge of surrounding influences: school mores, internal school system characteristics, family expectations for children and community attitudes toward the school system.

Analysis of change process in this program is conceived as

a study of the movement of teachers' attitudes and practices concurrently with the educational action. A systematic body of records is expected to yield insight into changes in attitudes, perception or motivation and also into major sources of reinforcement and resistance, on individual and institutional levels.

After the decision to locate the educational action in the Franklin School, the first phase of the project was begun with individual interviews of each teacher by an educator member of the project staff in order to convey more concretely what entering into the project would involve, to discuss the kinds of questions or issues of greatest interest to them, and to invite them to join with us.

An important criterion for a desirable common area of work with the teachers was that the content should be derived from their expressed interests or concerns and at the same time be clearly relevant to the mental health criteria which constitute the base line of the project. Concern about the variability of the children's level of interest and the loss of eagerness to learn as the children moved from earlier to later grades suggested a theme of major interest to us: the nature of involvement in learning, representing on the child level, the analogue of the broad general dimension "investment in living." Involvement in Learning became our central theme.

The first six weekly sessions constituted a preparatory period and were summarized as follows: "Our purpose was to establish a

working relationship that was friendly, accepting and conducive to free and easy interaction; establish our role as non-authoritarian and non-judgemental. We tried to accept all contributions and made every effort to establish the feeling that we did not have all the answers, but hoped that by mutual exploration we could deepen understanding and develop insight." The leaders encouraged participation of the group by using non-directive comments and open-ended questions. Since note-taking did not seem to hamper free discussion, tape-recording the meetings was suggested for the following year and was acceptable to the teacher groups. Topics opened up for discussion included:

learning as related to child interest and opportunity for discovery;

responsiveness to praise, acceptance, and recognition;

attitudes toward marks and report cards as reflecting parents' attitudes and pressures;

teacher role with respect to young children's dependence, need for protection;

problems of children who cannot work in groups, who are rejected, whom the teacher "does not like";

wide range of abilities in single grades, size of class registers;

use of outside experiences to develop interests, concepts, and information;

communication among teachers;

discrepancy between knowing what is being taught and what is really being learned.

During the second phase of the program the teachers, as a group, were interested in continuing the work along the same lines. The prospect of talking together, sharing ideas and questions, was positively anticipated but they were not oriented toward particular problem-resolutions nor defined directions. At an early point in this period the educator team described the teaching mores in the Franklin School to the project staff. They had found considerable variation within the teacher group but the following common characteristics were noted. The teachers:

- accept children, within certain limits, with no obvious evidence of hostility;

- are oriented toward group and grade standards rather than age and maturity levels;

- stress performance with minimal consideration of the processes underlying learning experience;

- enjoy neat, orderly, well-mannered children who function as a well-organized class, conforming to what is expected of them, and generally reject "acting-out" behavior;

- teach the skill subjects competently;

- set tasks that are primarily teacher-structured with relatively small opportunity for independent, individual thinking;

- consider their main responsibilities to be good teaching of the skills, establishing good work habits in the early years and preparing children well for later grades and later life;

- feel threatened when children cannot meet performance standards;

sense more subtle aspects of the teaching role than they can comfortably articulate: they are attuned, at a certain level, to children's involvement, but only talk about it in its manifest, behavioral aspects; they recognize evidence of change in certain children but hesitate to probe for possible explanations or interpretations.

Looking back to first contacts with the teachers the educator team noted these trends toward change: comments about children had become somewhat more questioning and probing, with less tendency to ascribe fixed characteristics to individuals; there was a somewhat greater tolerance of non-conforming behavior, more acceptance of children's contributions; attempts to stimulate the children's thinking rather than trying to elicit predetermined answers. In general, there was increased interest in child development, a readiness to take a developmental rather than a grade succession view of a child's school experience, and a more differentiated perception of children.

Although the teachers gave evidence that they were at least partially enacting these new perceptions, they themselves made no conscious acknowledgement of these changes. Involvement, as a theme, remained a latent issue, although the educator team felt that the teachers' thinking about manifest educational content was clearly in the sphere of "involvement" as it had been defined.

A small group of teachers enjoyed "talking things out" and looking at children in new ways without too much direct concern about teaching methods. Yet, new classroom projects had begun

to appear and creative activities were beginning to be thought of as indigenous rather than accessory to the learning program. Interaction became increasingly accepted among children and enlivened the school atmosphere.

The method of working with the teachers in the group sessions was given central attention during this period. General principles on method, based on a concept of psycho-educational consultation to which the project educators were oriented, had been stated before the actual work with the teachers began. The enactment of these principles raised questions of technique: how to move in a given direction and yet keep a joint "exploratory" tone; how to be accepting and non-controversial when matters of conflicting values for children and for education arise; how to carry a "catalytic" role without appearing to be falsely neutral.

The educator team made one observation of a changing trend with increasing confidence. The teachers were showing more interest in the developmental aspects of children's learning. At the same time, the team felt it important to offer some new content to the teachers, not in the form of demonstration or specific curriculum advice, but something that would lend another vista to their new perceptions. From interest in learning it was natural to proceed to an inquiry about children's thinking, to offer the teachers concrete material on the progressive changes that take place in thinking processes as children mature.

A series of verbal and non-verbal exercises was administered individually to one child from each class in the Franklin School. (Each teacher had agreed to select a "middle" child.) The exercises also included a self-image technique and a TAT picture, in order to extend the teacher's concept of children's thinking to more personal spheres of experience.

The findings were summarized in a group meeting with the teachers. Many of the implications from these findings were congruent with perceptions the teachers had been arriving at in the group sessions. For example, many of the children's responses were neither right nor wrong; they showed partial, exploratory attempts in the direction of positive thinking. The bondage of the young child to the concrete and the familiar was in clear contrast to the older children's imaginative ideas about uncommon uses of familiar objects and led to the question of whether they are being offered experiences likely to extend their reservoir of concepts and ideas. The children's assessment of their own ability in terms of school marks led to discussion about the criteria they have available for self-evaluation. This work did not have, nor was it expected to have, specific outcomes in relation to teaching. It did, presumably, extend the canvass against which the teachers were considering the process and the problems of learning.

The work with the teachers constitutes the central activity. However, for the theoretical and operational reasons previously

mentioned, it was never our intention to allow this work to become insulated from other aspects of the school.

Analysis

Basic goals of the Field Project were to provide an opportunity for analysis of the change processes involved in bringing school practices into closer alignment with mental health principles, and to carry on such analysis concurrently with the educational action so as to utilize insights thus gained in the ongoing development of the work.

Field notes covering all contacts, interviews, meetings and observations are kept, in addition to maching-recording of the group sessions with teachers. Analysis of these notes -- our raw data -- required the development of a schema specific to the needs of this program. One section of this schema -- teacher functioning -- is designated to meet the criteria as set forth here:

it should be comprehensive enough to include such items as perception and relatedness to children, teacher-functioning, level of the children's involvement in learning, teacher-role as an adult authority, etc.;

for each category of analysis, a cue system used illustratively is necessary and reflects the actualities of the educational action. For example, under the category: "supporting role of the teacher as an adult authority," one of the sub-categories is "patterns of acceptance and rejection." Relevant cues suggested include "qualities of sentimentality, 'pal-siness', techniques of sarcasm, humiliation, etc."

The categories and sub-categories represent the basic framework;

the coded records become systematic, qualitative summaries at the category level, serving the action program as it proceeds. The schema should also serve as a guide for further selective observation and recording by the educator team.

At the end of the first year of the educational action program, the educator team met with the full project staff for a series of four evaluation sessions. Using the schema for teacher functioning, the educator team was asked to assess the kind and degree of change which had taken place during the academic year. Furthermore, they were asked wherever possible to document how these changes had come about.

A central theme running through these discussions is the wide range of variation in the individuals involved. The members of the educator team differed not only in their estimates of the amount of change which had taken place in their teacher groups but also in their reasons for such change. They reported great variation in the areas and in the amounts of change which had occurred in the individual teachers.

More specifically, while all agreed that the group sessions were an essential source of change, one team member felt strongly that more effective changes in certain of her teachers had come about only after she was able to work with them individually and in their classrooms. The others (working with teachers in the

upper grades) found greater resistance to classroom observation and felt that the group process was the most significant influence for change.

Four major areas were evaluated: 1) orientation to children; 2) teaching function and methods; 3) authority role; 4) professional orientation. Looking at the Franklin School teachers as a group, there seemed to be more change in perception of and relation to children than in any other factor. However, the team agreed that there had been little movement toward understanding of the psychology of development on a profound level. For the group as a whole there had been little basic change in curriculum content, teaching method, or concept of the adult authority role. Individual teachers, on the other hand, had made rather striking strides toward curriculum enrichment, new techniques in creative writing, less anxiety about control.

The process of change seemed to be occurring in a cycle. In the group sessions:

the leader establishes rapport, a relaxed intercommunication of new ideas among the members of the group;

the group develops some understanding of these ideas on a new, though verbalized level;

at selected points, opportunities for changed enactment occur;

in the enactment, the teachers see the children or themselves in a new light;

reports of these enactments take the group discussions on to another level.

Termination of Field Action

The project staff agreed that in the next and final phase of the program special emphasis should be placed upon efforts to bring about changed enactment. Almost all the teachers were ready and eager for this -- new techniques, new materials, new ideas. Careful consideration should also be given to the question of how to "build in" these changes which had taken place, to reinforce, to integrate, to make them as permanent as possible.

The educator team recognized the importance of viewing their work first, within the context of the school system, and secondly, in the community as a whole. In the evaluation session, effort was made to identify certain areas of information which were needed from the sociologists' team and to anticipate the consonance or dissonance of the teachers changing attitudes with the values of the school system.

Three major goals were formulated for the final phase of the program which is currently in progress.

First, the educator team was ready for a re-assessment of the style of work with the teachers. In general terms, it was clear that a new level of professional relationship had been established. The teachers had an attitude of trust in the educator team, free of any quality of status anxiety, enjoying these "outsiders" interest

in them, and the experience of being professionally involved with people who had no supervisory relation to them. The question was whether the emphasis should be shifted from group sessions to individual consultation. Would this make it possible to become more active with the teachers on concrete implementation of insights, through suggestions of new materials, new curriculum organization and so on?

The answer, as might be anticipated, was not either-or. The group sessions still seemed vital to further development in different ways for different teachers. This varied from one teacher whose initially negative participation was changing in quality as he recognized that the group and the leader wanted him along with them, to another teacher who was an enthusiastic participant from the start but who was using the group as an arena for pulling apart ideas and suggestions as a prior step in arriving at something constructive, acceptable and hopefully reinforcing his own inclinations. The leaders themselves shifted in their roles: curriculum ideas and materials were brought into the group, related to the content of discussions and offered as suggestions. They were received with interest. More active classroom visiting naturally followed. More than half the teachers were ready and eager for individual consultations; these would now be focussed on what each teacher cared about most, for example, extra observation

of how the slow readers were working at their tasks, guidance on how available blocks could become a meaningful play program, discussion of baffling children, new source material for social studies, or techniques for helping children with book reviews.

A second goal for this final phase was the pursuit of a complex of questions raised early in the program. Are the attitudes and expectations of the teachers congruent with what the children experience at home? How much reality is there to the teachers' position that attempts at program enrichment would be hampered by parental pressures for skill subject emphasis? Are children difficult because parents do not support the "position" of the teachers in the children's eyes? A questionnaire on child rearing and education was developed and pre-tested in a similar suburban community. We were then ready to ask the parents and teachers of the Franklin School to fill out the questionnaire.

The parents had been asking to know more about the Bank Street program and several teachers had agreed to tell the story themselves, in a panel presentation, to be followed by full discussion. The atmosphere generated at this meeting was positive and appreciative; the teachers conducted themselves at a high professional level, competently and honestly; the parents expressed appreciation for being accepted as a knowledgeable, genuinely

interested audience. They were willing and interested to stay on to fill in the questionnaire, which the teachers had filled in previously. They asked for another meeting in which to hear a report on their responses and further discuss the questions which were asked.

Contrary to the teachers' preconceived ideas analysis of these two sets of responses indicates a surprisingly similar distribution of attitudes for the parent and teacher groups.

The third goal for this final phase is to complete the analysis of the changes that have taken place. Toward this goal, a member of the project research staff has been independently analyzing the recordings of the group sessions, the records of classroom observations and individual contacts, following the dimensions of the analytic schema for teacher functioning and child involvement. In addition, the team members will hold informal interviews with each teacher, after the group sessions have terminated. These interviews are planned to yield comparable material, in that they will deal with the general areas of the schema; the specific topics opened up, however, will differ according to the known particular interests of each teacher. The style of the interview will be continuous with the relationship already established between the teacher and the team member and will therefore be more conversational and consultative

than interrogatory.

It is planned not only to annotate directions in which change has taken place but to offer interpretations of the techniques and relationships with which change or the lack of change seem to be associated. Certain interesting general formulations have already begun to emerge.

The opportunity to communicate with each other professionally has generated changes in the school mores reaching beyond the limits of the group sessions led by the educator team. Interchange of ideas has progressed to an exchange of materials and techniques; in place of secretiveness and insulation there is a ferment of exchange and cross-referencing. In the group session, the quality of communication has a new tone: thoughtful consideration of differing points of view, earnest but less rancorous dealing with disagreement has replaced argument and condescension. One question, asked but not answered as yet, is whether such new experiences in communication for teachers in themselves lead to changes in the atmospheres which the teachers generate in their classrooms?

The easy interchange of ideas in the group sessions appears to be related to the non-didactic role which the educator team consciously carried from the beginning. They did not bring "the word" about what was right, nor a rule of thumb about "how to do." Children's learning was presented as a subject of searching

inquiry and children, not teachers, were in focus. The teachers were not pressed, directly or indirectly, to teach in new and different ways. There was time to talk and think, to doubt and consider. The team members trusted this would stimulate interest in trying out new practices. This trust was not always easy to sustain; too little seemed to be "happening." There was a period when it looked as though the teachers might not move from a "plateau of comfortable communication." Questions were raised: is some anxiety necessary as a drive toward the harder levels of applying new-found insights? Was the educational action creating a split within the teacher group? Is it separating the older, experienced teachers who were satisfied with the conscientious job they were doing within their own goals, from the younger, groping, less certain teachers who sensed exciting vistas beyond the image of teaching they had learned and acquired?

More than half the teachers became actively interested in implementing new ideas, trying out new materials and techniques, asking for help and consultation on an individual basis from the team members. Only lack of time has slowed the momentum of change that was built up. Although all the teachers have stayed with the group sessions, some developed a more attenuated identification with the goals of the project but willingly associated with the interpersonal patterns it had established.

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In any interpretation of change process it will be necessary to give due weight to what was significantly "new" to those involved. The teachers, apart from the newness of certain perceptions, concepts and techniques, were adapting to a generally new experience: how to relate to and learn from people who could offer but not enforce, who could listen and see without rendering judgement. For the team members there was a role to create as they went along: how to handle their disturbance when they came upon distortions of the ideas they had stimulated; how to abide by the "voluntary" condition for participation and yet communicate that they were not indifferent to whether a teacher came or not, nor casual about protecting the continuity of work from session to session.

In the early stages of the project, various forms of negativism and resistance had had to be dealt with. According to the point of view concerning psycho-educational counseling which this project shares with the pre-service teacher counseling program of Bank Street College, this resistance was not opened up to become the material for the work of the sessions. Instead, the team members tried to use their awareness of these processes in the way they dealt with educational content and guided the course of expression and communication.

There is agreement that there has been a gradual but noteworthy lessening of negativism on the part of the teachers. The team

members tend to lay this to the non-directive quality of the sessions, the acceptance, without hostility or censure on their part, of the forms that resistance took and the autonomy extended to individuals to use what they could, comfortably and satisfyingly, from what the project offered.

These are tentative, exploratory forays into the complex problem of what facilitates and what blocks change process in a mental-health-oriented program in an educational setting. When the analysis of the separate sources of data is completed we trust we shall have arrived at insights which will be helpful to others engaged in similar kinds of work.